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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

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March 21, 2007

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Waxman,

On Friday, March 16, 2007, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released its report entitled "Federal Efforts to Secure U.S.-Bound Air Cargo are in the Early Stages and Could be Strengthened." The report's findings contain Sensitive Security Information and will not be released publicly. However, having read the report, I strongly believe there are issues contained within it that should be addressed immediately.

The most current statistics from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) state that approximately 200 U.S. and foreign air carriers transport cargo into the U.S. from foreign countries. During 2005, approximately 9.4 billion pounds of air cargo entered the U.S. — 40 percent, or 4 billion pounds, were shipped on passenger aircraft. Of passenger aircrafts that transport cargo, about half of the hulls are filled with cargo. That's a lot of cargo entering the country.

While I am currently prohibited from discussing all of the information contained in the findings of the report, the findings led to six GAO recommendations for executive action. I was given permission to highlight the recommendations.

1. TSA and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) — the two agencies within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) responsible for air cargo security — should develop a risk-based strategy to address inbound air. This strategy should clearly define TSA's and CBP's responsibilities for securing inbound air cargo;
2. TSA and CBP should develop a process for information sharing, including the results of TSA's inbound air cargo compliance inspections;
3. TSA should establish a methodology and time frame for completing assessments of inbound air cargo vulnerabilities and critical assets.

The assessments should be used as a basis for prioritizing the actions necessary to enhance the security of inbound air cargo;

4. TSA should establish a timeframe for completing an assessment as to whether the existing inspection exemptions for inbound air cargo pose an unacceptable vulnerability to the security of air cargo. And, if necessary, address the identified vulnerabilities;

5. TSA should develop and implement an inspection plan that includes performance goals and measures to evaluate foreign and domestic air carrier compliance with inbound air cargo security requirements; and

6. TSA should collaborate with industry and foreign governments to identify security practices used abroad that might strength the Department's overall air cargo security system.

I am pleased to report DHS agreed with all of GAO's recommendations. This is an excellent starting point, but we should not allow an agreement on paper dismiss the need for proper oversight. We need to be diligent in examining the process for how TSA and CBP will implement GAO's recommendations.

In the near future, GAO will release a public version of the inbound air cargo report. I ask that when the report is released, you schedule a hearing to examine this issue which is vital to the nation's security. In the years following 9/11, we were relentless in our pursuit of safety in the sky. I worry we have become complacent. I believe a hearing will not only serve our oversight purposes, but will also remind the public that we must stay vigilant in protecting aviation security. I look forward to discussing this matter with your further.

Sincerely,



Tom Davis  
Ranking Republican Member